

Sharing Your Message: Ideas For Talking With Others

There are many opportunities to talk about what can be done in your community to support children and families. Raising the issue over and over again is important to spur action among others in your community. Community association meetings, school functions, planned media events, or events at churches, synagogues, and mosques all provide good opportunities to share the message about promoting safe children and healthy families.

It is important to emphasize in your remarks that everyone in the community can do something to help. Remember to tailor your presentation for the format of your program, the nature of your audience, and the length of your presentation. Below are specific talking points about supporting families and preventing child abuse and neglect.

Please refer to other factsheets in this packet and those available online from the Prevention section of the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information website (<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/prevention>) and the organizations listed in the resource directory on page 85 to supplement these talking points.



Be one of the STARS in your community working to enhance children's safety and support families. Here are some easy suggestions for being a star:

Support children and parents in your community.

There are many things you can do to support kids and parents in your community. Be a good neighbor. Offer to babysit. Donate your children's used clothing, furniture, and toys for use by another family. Be kind and supportive, particularly to new parents. Be involved with programs and activities in your community that support children and parents. Talk to others about getting involved with such activities.

Take a positive perspective.

Whether giving a speech, developing a flier, facilitating a class, or talking one-on-one with parents, make an effort to focus on what parents and families are doing right and how they can enhance that. Seek opportunities to build on and promote positive parent-child interactions through effective communication, consistent discipline, and setting limits.

Address the issue.

Contact your local school district and faith community to encourage them to sponsor classes and support programs for new parents. Talk with neighbors and others in the community about what they think needs to be and can be done. Call or write your candidates and elected officials to help educate them about issues in your community and the need for programs that support healthy and safe children and families.



Recognize that parenting can be challenging.

Most parents have a lot of responsibilities and experience numerous stressors in their everyday lives. Stress may come from work demands, money worries, responsibilities around the home, illness, or relationship difficulties with a spouse or others. Responding to the needs of one or more children in addition to these issues can be challenging or, at times, overwhelming. It is important to try to provide assistance to parents before those difficulties become too much for them to cope with in an appropriate and healthy way.

Strengthen coping skills.

Certain individual, family, and community characteristics have been shown to enhance the coping skills of parents and children and help keep children safe from abuse and neglect. Strategies that help support and protect children and families include:

- ☆ Help parents develop friendships and mutual support systems.
- ☆ Provide ways for parents to learn more about parenting issues and how to build stable, positive, and nurturing parent-child relationships.
- ☆ Suggest parents speak to their child's doctor about any concerns, frustrations, or questions regarding their child's behavior or development.
- ☆ Offer extra support to families when they need it, by addressing housing, health, or employment issues.
- ☆ Help parents develop strong and healthy coping skills.
- ☆ Help children develop social skills, positive self-images, and appropriate peer relationships.

Other ways you can be one of the STARS supporting families during Child Abuse Prevention Month in April and throughout the year:

- ☆ Encourage schools, tribal communities, and other community organizations to provide classes in parenting education for students and parents.
- ☆ Request a speaker or inservice training through the child protective services hotline.
- ☆ Provide friendship and guidance to parents and children by volunteering for mentoring programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters or Befriend-a-Child.
- ☆ Start or join community efforts that support families and prevent child abuse and neglect.
- ☆ If you are in a store or other public place and a child is in danger, offer assistance. For example, if a child has been left unattended in a shopping cart, stand by the child until the parent returns.

***Remember, supporting families and children is a shared responsibility.
We all have a role we can play.***

